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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 USOSCE 000178

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

STATE FOR VCI/CCA, EUR/PRA, EUR/RPM, SCA/CEN

JCS FOR COL NORWOOD

OSD FOR ISA (PERENYI)

NSC FOR DOWLEY

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PARM PREL OSCE

SUBJECT: OPEN SKIES: LIFT OFF! 500 FLIGHT COMMEMORATION

PLENARY AND BALLOON RELEASE

REF: STATE 73228

¶1. (U) Summary. On July 14, the Open Skies Consultative Commission (OSCC) held a special plenary session to commemorate the conduct of 500 observation flights since the Treaty entered into force in January 2002. The U.S. initiative received strong support from all delegations, and the 500 balloon release garnered positive press coverage. The Finnish Ambassador, speaking on behalf of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, remarked on the historical linkage between this event under U.S. Chairmanship and former President Bush's proposal initiating the Treaty in May 1989.

Many U.S. reps received accolades from other delegations regarding U.S. leadership of the event. The U.S. initiative was particularly welcomed as a sign of commitment to European arms control and security. While this was the final plenary under U.S. Chairmanship of the OSCC for the spring/summer session, we will remain in the Chair until Belarus assumes the Chair for the next plenary on September 22. End summary.

500 Observation Flights) Well Done!

¶2. (U) On July 14, the U.S.-hosted the final OSCC plenary for the summer with a special meeting designed to commemorate the success of the 500 observation flights conducted as of this summer since entry into force of the Treaty in January 2002 (OSCC.INF/18/08). As of July 10, 488 flights have been announced. The 500th flight should occur within three weeks time. See the updated "flight tracker" at OSCC.DEL/7/08/Rev
¶2. The meeting was open to the press and photographers.

¶3. (U) The U.S. Chair, Chief Arms Control Delegate Hugh Neighbour opened the meeting with a short statement highlighting this collective accomplishment. In particular he noted the flights have more than proven the concept of openness and transparency envisioned by former President Bush when he launched the initiative for Open Skies in May 1989.

¶4. (U) The U.S. also emphasized the efforts of all the individuals responsible for accomplishing these missions. The heads of verification agencies from Germany (Mertens), Russia (Hudoklinov) and the U.S. (Ronnie Faircloth, Defense Threat Reduction Agency) were present and recognized on behalf of all the mission teams. The U.S. presented a framed poster for permanent display in the Hofburg of the "500th Commemoration" graphic designed by USAF rep Eric Scholl from

the Open Skies Media Processing Facility at Wright-Patterson, AFB. The U.S. also recognized the importance of the work provided by the various offices within the OSCE Secretariat.

15. (U) The panel of speakers for the special plenary included the current German Ambassador to the OSCE, Axel Berg, former Hungarian Ambassador Marton Krazsnai, and long-time Russian delegation expert General Alexander Peresypkin. (See statements in Journal.) Germany mentioned its plans for a seminar in October to discuss future aircraft options, following on to the sensor discussions held in May 2007. Krazsnai suggested further review of options for regional conflict prevention resulting from environmental causes such as water shortages in Central Asia. Russia applauded the success so far, but believes the Treaty's potential is far from fully utilized. Peresypkin said additional quotas could be flown, further accession of new members, and flights in response to requests of other organizations remain possible areas for development.

6.(U) Several States Parties spoke after the panel, led by the Finnish Ambassador on behalf of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office. Finland saw it as fitting that the U.S. was able to organize the event during its chairmanship, especially since the Treaty had been an initiative of former President Bush in 1989. Finland stressed the importance of transition to a digital world in order to keep the Treaty relevant. The Ambassadors of the UK and Greece spoke in support of the event and urged that additional states consider accession. Representatives from Italy and Romania emphasized the importance of the Treaty for European security

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and continued confidence-building. Cyprus reiterated its readiness to join the Treaty.

7.(U) Immediately following the special plenary, over 200 OSCC delegates gathered on the front steps of the Hofburg Palace and released 500 balloons as a symbolic gesture accompanying the 500 successful observation flights. U.S. and other delegates were interviewed during this press event, and several positive articles were posted by July 15. Television and print media coverage included CNN International, German (ZDF) and Austrian (ORF) channels, AFP, and Jane's Defense Weekly is expected.

8.(U) Comment: Delegation representatives conveyed overwhelmingly positive remarks to several U.S. reps following the event. Many believed it was an important opportunity to demonstrate the benefits of a Treaty that is working well, despite other setbacks in the European conventional arms control area and on-going tensions in the Georgia/Russia relationship. Even Russian rep Ulyanov praised the U.S. for its leadership and organizational skills. All seemed genuinely delighted to be able to participate in this inclusive "good news" event initiated by the U.S. USDel greatly appreciates the team effort by all U.S. reps involved in organizing the event. End Comment.

Business meeting:

9.(U) During the standard business meeting held just prior to the commemoration plenary, and closed to the press as is standard practice, the OSCC adopted two Decisions (OSCC.INF/16/08):

--Decision 4/08) The OSCC Scales of Distribution for 2008 and 2009; and

--Decision 5/08) Revision Three to Decision 7/07 on the Distribution of Active Quotas for Observation Flights in the Year 2008 (which allows the U.S. two additional sharing flights, one each with Latvia and the UK.)

10.(U) The UK made a clarification statement regarding its future intentions for participation under the Treaty. The UK continues to value the Open Skies Treaty, and remains committed toward its implementation. It will continue to

receive all passive quotas (inbound missions). However, there is no longer a budget for its Andover aircraft, so it will no longer conduct missions on its own aircraft. However, it hopes to conduct three missions in 2009 in cooperation with other partners/aircraft. (See Journal for full statement).

11.(SBU) Comment: In early May the UK informed OSCC delegations informally that it would no longer be able to fly its Andover aircraft, and would likely cease all active missions. Following a demarche from the U.S., and an offer from the U.S. to share a flight on our aircraft in August, the UK revised its original intentions such that it will be able to continue flying with partners. On the margins, USDel emphasized to UK reps that we view this as a positive development, not only for the UK, but for the message it sends to other States Parties as well. End comment.

¶12. (U) Certification Plans; Quota Distribution Prep; Sensor update:

--Romania and Norway announced further information on plans for an aircraft certification event for September 15-21 in Bucharest. This will be a joint certification event including the Pod Group C-130 with new sensor configurations.

The event will be supported by Germany as well. Technical data packages with pre-certification data were distributed to all delegations. U.S. rep Scholl (OSMPF, Wright-Patterson AFB) will hand carry the data to USA for review. (See Journal).

--Sensor Working Group Update: USDel provided a report from the U.S. Chair of the Informal Working Group on Sensors (IWGS). A recent proposal for changes to the draft for

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Revision One of Decision 14 and Decision 17 were received from one delegation (Russia) and have been posted on the IWGS website for review by the group. Comments on the proposals are due August 1. (OSCC.SEN/7/08).

--Germany announced that information was distributed in preparation for the October 9-10 annual quota distribution discussions (OSCC.INF/19/08).

FINLEY